

STATEMENT OF RONALD R. SWITZER, SUPERINTENDENT OF MAMMOTH CAVE NATIONAL PARK, THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT'S MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL RECREATION AREAS AND HOW THOSE MANAGEMENT POLICIES MIGHT APPLY TO LAND BETWEEN THE LAKES NATIONAL RECREATION AREA.

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Thank you for the opportunity to offer the Department of the Interior's views on management of national recreation areas and how our management policies might apply to Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area.

Mr. Chairman, national recreation areas in the National Park System were originally units surrounding reservoirs impounded by dams built by other federal agencies. The first unit in the National Park System with this designation was Lake Mead National Recreation Area, and the National Park Service took over administration of it in 1936. As of 1995, the National Park Service was responsible for administration of 18 national recreation areas. The National Park Service manages many of these areas under cooperative agreements with other federal agencies. The concept of national recreation areas has evolved to include various types of land and water resources set aside for recreational use by Congress including major areas in urban centers, for example, Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area near Los Angeles, and Gateway National Recreation Area in New York City and New Jersey. Activities at national recreation areas range from camping and fishing to cultural events and music festivals, depending on the individual area's resources.

Other federal agencies also manage national recreation areas. The Forest Service and the Army Corps of Engineers are here to discuss the national recreation areas under their jurisdictions. Within

the Department of the Interior, in addition to the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers one national recreation area. Created by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (PL 96-487) in 1980, the one-million acre White Mountains National Recreation Area in central Alaska is managed by the BLM, pursuant to extensive land use planning efforts and congressional direction, “to provide for public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment and for the conservation of the scenic, scientific, historic, fish and wildlife, and other values contributing to public enjoyment of” the area. Open year-around, this national recreation area has more than 200 miles of summer and winter trails, with public uses ranging from birding, boating, fishing and camping, to snowmobiling, dog-sledding, skiing and wilderness backpacking. There are few conflicts between user groups and no daily use fees are charged.

The Fish and Wildlife Service does not administer any national recreation areas. With certain small exceptions such as fish hatchery sites, by law, all lands administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service are classified as National Wildlife Refuges and subject to the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act. That Act provides that any public use of a refuge, including recreational use, may be permitted only when it is determined to be compatible with the wildlife conservation purposes for which the area was established. Executive Order 12996 supplements that standard by providing that fish- and wildlife-oriented recreation, and specifically hunting and fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation, are priority public uses of refuges where they are compatible and in the public interest. The Service has been phasing out public uses of refuges that are not directly related to wildlife, such as motor boating and waterskiing, or that can be readily provided by the private sector, such as campgrounds. In recent years, the Service budget

has provided approximately \$28,000,000 for public use management for the entire Refuge System, slightly over \$3,000,000 of which is devoted to management of a statutorily-required subsistence hunting program for rural residents in Alaska.

The National Park Service seeks to manage all parklands in accordance with its mission, as established by Congress in the National Park Service Organic Act (August 25, 1916): “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” In the 1970s, Congress elaborated on the Organic Act, confirming that all park units have equal legal standing in a national system. Accordingly, the National Park Service treats each unit of the system with the same measure of concern and gives attention to all resources in a park regardless of its title or the way in which it became a part of the National Park System. Nearly every unit of the system is a mixture of natural, historical, and recreational features, so our approach is to respect all significant values and to manage the complexities of each park unit comprehensively. We recognize the differences inherent in park purposes and titles, but we manage based on actual conditions rather than official designations. This means that historic structures, natural resources, and recreational resources, regardless of where they are located, will be similarly managed.

Generally, our initial effort is to identify nationally significant cultural and natural resource values. Once those are established, we manage our units to protect and preserve those values. According to National Park Service Management Policies, (Chapter 8:1-3) recreational uses are to be managed

in such a way as to protect park resources and prevent derogation of park purposes and values. Specifically, each park unit develops and implements its own visitor use management plan to ensure that recreational uses are consistent with its authorizing legislation. Tools for managing recreational activities include regulations, permit and reservation systems, local restrictions, public use limits and special designations.

Unless it is mandated by statute, the National Park Service will not allow a recreational activity in a park or in certain locations within a park if it would involve or result in:

- o inconsistency with the park's enabling legislation or proclamation, or derogation of the values or purposes for which the park was established
- o unacceptable impacts on visitor enjoyment due to interference or conflict with other visitor use activities
- o consumptive use of park resources (does not apply to certain traditional activities specifically authorized by NPS general regulations)
- o unacceptable impacts on park resources or natural processes
- o unacceptable levels of danger to the welfare or safety of the public, including participants.

In short, the National Park Service will consider the park's purposes and the effects on park resources and visitors when determining the appropriateness of specific activities in a specific park.

In the case of Land Between the Lakes, we have no current studies which address its national significance, suitability and feasibility. It is therefore difficult to speculate on how our management policies would apply to that particular area.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my written remarks. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.